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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 3688th meeting of the Security Council, held on 15 August 1996 in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in Croatia", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General of 5 August 1996 (S/1996/622) on the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES), and the letter from the Secretary-General of 2 August 1996 (S/1996/632) concerning the funding of the existing local administrative structures in the area of operations of UNTAES.

"The Security Council welcomes the progress made by UNTAES in implementing the Basic Agreement on the Region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (S/1995/951, annex) signed on 12 November 1995 (the Basic Agreement), and in promoting the full and peaceful reintegration of the region of Eastern Slavonia into the Republic of Croatia. It stresses that the restoration and maintenance of the multi-ethnic character of Eastern Slavonia are important to international efforts to maintain peace and stability in the region of the former Yugoslavia as a whole. It reminds both parties of their obligation to cooperate with UNTAES. It underlines the importance of economic rehabilitation of the Region, the establishment of a Transitional Police Force and the return of displaced persons and refugees to their homes in the Region, as well as the importance of the promotion by the Government of Croatia of the return of displaced persons and refugees to their homes of origin elsewhere in the Republic of Croatia. It further underlines the importance of the holding of elections in accordance with the Basic Agreement, once the necessary conditions have been established.

"The Security Council reminds the Government of Croatia of its responsibility to cooperate with UNTAES and to create conditions conducive to maintaining stability in the Region. It calls on the Government of Croatia to take the necessary action without further delay.

"The Security Council recalls the statements of its President of 22 May (S/PRST/1996/26) and 3 July (S/PRST/1996/30) and again urges the Government of Croatia to adopt a comprehensive amnesty law concerning all persons who, voluntarily or by coercion, served in the civil administration, military or police forces of the local Serb authorities in the former United Nations Protected Areas, with the exception of those who committed war crimes as defined in international law. The Council notes with concern that the amnesty law and the action subsequently taken by the Government of Croatia, as described by the Secretary-General in his report of 5 August, have been insufficient to create confidence among the local Serb population in Eastern Slavonia. The Council notes the general agreement reached by President Tudjman and President Milosevic in Athens on 7 August 1996 that a general amnesty is an indispensable condition for the safe return of refugees and displaced persons. It expects this agreement to be followed up by corresponding concrete measures.

"The Security Council notes with appreciation the agreement reached by the Government of Croatia and UNTAES on issues relating to the funding of public services on the territory administered by UNTAES (S/1996/648, annex). It notes, however, that this funding is not sufficient to cover all the costs of such services and it expects further funding to be made available by the Government of Croatia urgently and without conditions. It stresses the importance of ensuring a functioning civil administration so as to maintain stability in the region and help ensure the fulfilment of the mission objectives of UNTAES. The Council, having regard to its resolution 1037 (1996), also reminds the Government of Croatia of the need to contribute towards the costs of the UNTAES operation.

"The Security Council recalls that the Basic Agreement provides for a transitional period of 12 months which may be extended at most to another period of the same duration if so requested by one of the parties. It stresses the importance it attaches to UNTAES being able to complete its mandated tasks, including the organization of elections as provided for in the Basic Agreement, promptly and in full. These tasks are, as the Secretary-General notes, the building blocks for the difficult process of reconciliation. To that end, the Council affirms its readiness to consider, at an appropriate time, extending the duration of the mandate of UNTAES, on the basis of the Basic Agreement, its resolution 1037 (1996), and a recommendation from the Secretary-General.

"The Security Council expresses its appreciation to the Transitional Administrator and his staff, and reaffirms its full support for the efforts of the Transitional Administrator.

"The Security Council will remain seized of the matter."